

THE
SORROWS of MATILDA,

A
NOVEL

IN
TWO VOLUMES:

THE
Juvenile Attempt
of
A YOUNG LADY.

VOL. II.

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THE
SORROWS
OF
MATILDA.

CHAP. I.

*Matilda escapes from the habitation of
Mrs. Holmes.*

IT was scarce day-light when Mary set off to her friend; she desired Matilda in the mean time not to let the girl, or any one into the chamber, till she came back, lest she should be missed.

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B

Mary

Mary soon returned, and to the great joy of Matilda, told her that the young woman would meet her at six o'clock in the evening in the lane at the side of their house, and would conduct her to a place of safety. "I will contrive—said she—to come and see you every other evening, or oftner if I can, without giving them cause to suspect that I am privy to your escape.

" Alas!—said Matilda—my dear girl, I fear it will never be in my power to reward you for your kindness, but I shall ever hold you as my dearest friend, and carefully treasure in my bosom the obligations you have heaped upon me, that I may acquit myself of them if it should ever be in my power.

“ If you will favour me with your friendship and esteem—replied Mary—I shall be happy; for I don’t know any body, except Mr. Jason, I have so great an affection for as you, and if I can assist you in any correspondence with Mr. Edward, I will do it with pleasure, and I dare say in a little time things will take a favourable turn, and you will see an end of your misfortunes.”

“ In the course of the day you must pack up what clothes you have in as small a parcel as possible, and get yourself ready by six o’clock, when you can pretend to take a walk in the garden, and from thence may contrive your escape very well, but during the day you must appear cheerful for fear my mother should

suspect that you over-heard her discourse with Ernest.

Matilda played the hypocrite tolerably well, notwithstanding many horrid fears and apprehensions invaded her bosom, and frequently agitated her frame.

She set down to work as usual, when Mrs. Holmes, with dissimulating voice and countenance, enquired if she had heard any more of Mr. Harvey? "Ia!—she cried, in her vulgar manner—I am sure he is a very handsome, comely gentleman as ever I saw, and I cannot think what you dislike him for? But young folks are apt to be difficult, and often, like children, quarrel with their bread and butter."

Matilda

Matilda could scarce contain her sentiments on this subject, but Mary perceiving resentment kindling in her eye, quieted her by signs as well as she could, lest in her anger she might inadvertently betray herself.

The time was now nearly arrived for Matilda's departure, Mrs. Holmes went out to pay a visit to one of her neighbours, which gave our heroine a fair opportunity of leaving the house without molestation.

She took an affectionate leave of Mary, and requested if she saw Edward, she would inform him of his brother's attempt, but not to acquaint him where she was at present gone; "My dear friend—said Matilda—let me see you to-morrow, I entreat

entreat you, that I may know the worst."

Mary assured her she would be at Mrs. Lake's, the name of the lady where Mary's friend lived, the next day.

Then taking a tender adieu, in which they both of them shed tears, they parted: Matilda in search of an asylum to protect her from the wicked machinations of Ernest, and Mary to pacify her mother, when she should find the bird flown, and her golden expectations dispersed in air.

Matilda proceeding to the bottom of the lane, saw a chaise stop, and a decent young woman alighting from it: The stranger addressed

Matilda

Matilda very politely, and said that having acquainted her mistress of the particulars of her unpleasant situation, she immediately desired her to bring the chaise, that the young lady might not be fatigued, or insulted, by the way.

Matilda expressed her sense of the obligation conferred on her by her mistress, as well as for the kindness she expressed for her.

They drove through a number of intricate bye-lanes, which lengthened their journey more than two miles; a precaution they took to avoid being met by any that might give intelligence of them: as Matilda was apprehensive that Ernest would be indefatigable in his pursuit of her.

After

After a circuitous ride of about two hours, they arrived at home; Mr. and Mrs. Lake stood at the garden-gate ready to receive Matilda, which they did with the utmost kindness and hospitality, their kind reception gave her infinite surprise, intermingled with no small portion of satisfaction, as she did not expect to be treated so politely.

She made a graceful apology for intruding herself into their family, and giving them so much trouble, but that she hoped while she was there, that the exertion of those little abilities she was mistress of, would prevent her from becoming altogether an incumbrance.

Mrs. Lake took her by the hand, and with a smile of the most encouraging

raging affability, said, make no apology, my dear, your unmerited sufferings, and unhappy situation, are sufficient recommendations to our esteem, but your charming appearance bespeak you possessed of so many other claims to our friendship, that we think the obligation conferred on us.

Mr. Lake begged she would make herself welcome, and led her into an elegant parlour, where he ordered the servant to bring some refreshment, which she thanked them for, but declined accepting.

CHAP. I.

olden by *Mary's visit to Matilda.*

THE next morning according to her promise, Mary went to Mrs. Lake's—she acquainted Matilda with what happened at home after that her flight was discovered, and the anger of her mother on the occasion, who charged her with being concerned in her going off.

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She

“ She said she was convinced that it was a plan contrived ; but that she would find you out, if you was above ground ; indeed, her rage and ill humour lasted all day.”

“ At night when Mr. Harvey came to fetch you, and heard you were gone, he was in a terrible passion, and vowed vengeance on my mother ; as he left us, swearing that if he once more got you into his power, he would take care you should not escape so easily.”

“ Early this morning a servant came from lady Harvey, who gave you a shocking character, and said you had tried to seduce his young master, but that his mistres was so good a lady, she wished to reclaim you, and save you from perdition.”

“ The

" The man's speaking so ill of you, exasperated me so much, that I could not help abusing him, and telling him that it was all envy and malice, and that he ought to be sent to prison for taking away the young lady's character. My mother scolded me well when he was gone, for intermeddling with what I had no business."

" I hope, Miss, that your troubles are now all over ; Mrs. Lake is a very good lady, and has had her share of sorrows herself—she has had severe and heavy misfortunes ; her's is a very melancholy story ; I heard it from Sukey, her own maid, and will tell it you, if you wish to hear it."

Matilda

Matilda signified that it would oblige her.

" You must know then, Miss,—said Mary, at the same time looking round her to see if the door was shut—you must know, as I was saying—before Mrs. Lake was married, she and her sister lived with their father, their mother having died before they were grown up. Their father being a very gay man, used to have balls and what do you call those tables, where they play at cards?—I understand you—interrupted Matilda—you mean gaming tables: or perhaps he gave routs—aye, that was it—cried Mary—he used to have routs, and a great number of Lord; and great people came to them.

Amongst them was one Lord Est, a very handsome young nobleman, who fell desperately in love with Miss Fanny, and she with him, so what did they do but went to church and were married: as my lord was going on his travels, and I suppose was afraid some other lord might get Miss Fanny the while; for Sukey says she was a beautiful young lady, and very good natured,—she was remarkable fond of Sukey, and intrusted her with the secret."

Before his lordship went abroad, Sukey used to let him in secretly to see her young mistress; and he had not been gone from her long, when she was safely delivered of a beautiful boy."

" How

“ How to act about the child, she was utterly at a loss; at last, it was determined that they should dress him very plain, and put him into a basket, which should be left at the door of her father’s house; in hopes that as he was very fond of children, he would take a liking to the little stranger, and adopt it, then Miss Fanny would have Edgar, for so he was named, after his lordship, always with her, without the fear of any discovery, of which she was very apprehensive, in the absence of her lord.”

“ Accordingly Sukey laid the babe at the door, when she knew his grandfather would see him as he was going out; but I must tell you, Miss, that before his lordship went abroad, he gave Miss Fanny a locket

with his name engraved on it, which she tied round Edgar's neck, and in the hurry they were in they forgot to take it off, as his little pin-before hid it."

" The old gentleman, Miss Fanny's father, upon finding the child soon espied the locket, and finding Lord Est wrote on it, was very much enraged, declaring he would send the infant to the Earl, his lordship's father."

" Miss Fanny, or if you please, her Ladyship, afraid of losing Edgar, fell at her father's feet, and owned the child. He raved at her, and vowed he would send the child away, but upon Mrs. Lake's intercession, he changed his mind, and her lady-

ship

ship lived some time tolerably happy with little Edgar.

A few months after her father came into the room where she was sitting, and with a stern and savage countenance took the child from her, swearing she should never have it again, unless she would consent to marry Mr. Ward, an old gentleman who had wooed her some time: he was very rich, and had lent Miss Fanny's father a large sum of money on condition that he would let him have his daughter.

The poor lady threw herself at his feet, and begged that he would have mercy on her child; for that he could not help his parent's faults.

“ Do not tell me—cried the cruel old gentleman—if you dont marry Mr. Ward, you shall never see your boy again ; and as for the youngster that you have had this bastard by he shall never see your face more, I will take care of that ; so do as you will, you shall marry Mr. Ward to-night ; if not, you know the fate of your boy. I have told Mr. Ward there is a child in the family, which you have taken a great fancy to, and he says he shall love it as well as yourself.”

She answered—“ My baby, my Edgar, is no bastard, my lord his father, is my husband. Heavens forbid my boy should be called so by any person but you ; for I believe I should be the death of them !”

“ Don’t

“ I Don’t tell me—replied the father—you married this Lord without my consent, therefore I have acquainted his father, and the marriage is dissolved, so, remember your child goes if you do not consent.”

The poor lady then complied with his command sooner than lose her boy; indeed Susan says, she believes that her mistress went mad, and knew not what she did, or that they gave her a medicine for she married this hateful old fellow, and when ever she reflected on her fate, she was always threatened to have her child taken from her, so she told her sorrows to no body but Sukey, who used to weep with her for whole nights together.

“ But

“ But now—says Mary—I am come to the most melancholy part of the story ; and whenever I think of it, it makes me cry ready to break my heart ; however, I will try to finish it as well as I can. Matilda thanked her and told her she was much interested in her relation, and encouraged her to proceed, my lord—continued she—sobbing and wiping her eyes—on hearing of Fanny’s cruelty, as it was described to him, he lost his senses.”

He went directly to Mr. Ward’s seat, this very house we are now in, and I don’t know but it was done in this very room too ; for I was told it was done in a fitting room.

“ But what was it he did—said Matilda—interrupting her.”

“ B ”

“ Why,

“ Why, he came to the room where his lady was sitting—for Sukey followed him.”

“ On entering the room, he hastily caught her in his arms, and cried, oh, Fanny ! Fanny ! you have killed me ! then taking two pistols from his pocket, he shot the poor lady, and then himself.—such a dreadful sight, Sukey says, she thought she never could have survived it.

Little Edgar was entrusted to her care, and is now grown up a fine young gentleman, and he does not know but Mr. Lake is his father, for they are very kind to him, and wish him never to know the unhappy fate of his parents.—Mr. Ward died soon after his unfortunate lady, of old age.

and her cruel father went abroad,
and has not since returned.

Here their conversation was interrupted by the presence of Mrs. Lake. She expressed her pleasure at finding Mary so good a girl; she said to protect virtue was the duty of all, and those who fulfilled that duty were sure to be rewarded.

Your friend, i said she, addressing herself to Mary—has already gained my affection, and of which I am sure she will not prove unworthy, although we have been so short a time acquainted; all I am extremely sorry that I shall be obliged to leave her so soon, but Mr. Lake and myself are going to Wales. During our absence I will leave Matilda to the care of Lady Harvey, she is an excellent

excellent woman and will be proud
of such a companion.

Matilda was struck with astonishment at the name of Lady Harvey, but could not take the liberty of expostulating on the disagreeableness of the proposal. She thanked Mrs. Lake for her kindness and wishing her a good evening, took her leave.

Matilda followed her out of the room under the pretence of seeing her to the gate. They were no sooner out of hearing than Mary broke silence, and cried—“ O, Miss ! what will become of you now ? If you stay here till the family go to Wales ; you will then be sent back to Lady Harvey’s, what I can do for you now, I am sure I cannot tell.

Matilda

Matilda threw her arms round Mary, and weeping, said—"O thou dear girl! take me away with you; for nothing but misery awaits me here. Alas!—Mary answered—that is impossible, I must leave you to God's protection, I have no friend to confide in but Sukey; we must advise with her, but I certainly think the most prudent thing you can do is to remain here; very probably some unforeseen occurrence may happen in your favour, or they may take you to Wales with them.

Matilda reclining her wretched head on Mary's bosom, while the tears flowed from her ever streaming eyes—alas!—said she—wherever I wander fresh woes accompany my steps. Oh Mary, thou kind girl, if

If ever you should desert me, I shall be forlorne indeed.

“ Never doubt my friendship—she replied—but do not despair; I hope you will be happy yet, but it grows late and I must depart; but believe me I share your sorrows, and what a poor girl like me can do, shall be done, if possible, to rescue you from your persecutors.

She then left her, and Matilda pensively followed a few paces, but she was soon out of sight, and she was returning to the house, but turning her head and looking down the avenue, who should she see approach the gate but Ernest Harvey.

Heavens! to what a situation was this unhappy fair reduced. Her

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feelings were wounded beyond the power of diction to describe; she fell almost dead with grief and terror at his feet. The garden being very extensive and the number of trees that surrounded the house, prevented their being seen.

Matilda finding herself exposed to his cruelty, thought it best to implore his mercy.

"Oh, Matilda!—said Ernest—had you always been thus kind to me; how many distracting pangs had it spared. He then took her in his arms, oh my angel! continued he, embracing her—will you forgive the miseries you have suffered through my cruelty; but it was love that set my brains a madding, and love must plead my cause.

"Sir

“ Sir,—replied Matilda—you have certainly been the cause of all my woes since I left my father’s house; though you knew I was turned out a wanderer, exposed to every danger; and what is most unpardonable, laid crimes to my charge that I was wholly innocent of. But I am willing to forget it all; be now my friend, and time may reconcile me to you,—grant me but one request.

Here he threw himself at her feet, and with tears in his eyes exclaimed, “ O, thou too lovely girl! why treat me with such mortifying reserve? is it possible I can refuse you anything ? ”

“ Then Sir,—said Matilda—conceal from Mrs. Lake that you know

me, and what has before happened ; for should she become acquainted with my story I should instantly be sent to your cruel mother.

He promised her that he would be as silent as the grave on all former circumstances, and appear an entire stranger to her.

She then begged leave to return, as Mrs. Lake would be displeased at her staying so long, he complied with her desire, and soon after followed her into the house. In this unexpected visit a great many compliments passed between him and Mrs. Lake ; he treated Matilda with all the politeness of a stranger, which made her easy, and enabled her to make part of the company with tolerable composure.

Mr.

Mr. Lake now came in, and after welcoming his new guests said he had just been to Lady Harvey's, who would honour them with her company to dinner the next day ; this was sad news for Matilda as she had so short a time to search for a new abode, it being impossible for her to remain where she was, without being discovered by her Ladyship, and to be again under her despotic power was her worst fear.

She once thought of flying to Edward for protection, but she remembered how improper it would appear in the eyes of the world, who would not fail to blacken her character with their suspicions, however spotless and pure her actions, and perhaps plunge herself into deeper misery.

Mrs. Lake seemed compassionate and kind; Matilda therefore determined to hazard being overseen by Lady Harvey, and in the event of her being recognised by that lady; to implore Mrs. Lake's protection, and reveal to her the cause of all her sufferings.

The next morning as Matilda was sitting at work with Mrs. Lake, she took the opportunity to unbosom herself to her, and craved her assistance. She addressed her in so pleasing a manner, and told her unfortunate story so artlessly, expressing her pain at giving her so much trouble, and throwing herself on her knees, begged her protection so movingly, that Mrs. Lake could not withstand her solicitation.

Matilda

Matilda's modest look and engaging manner would have infused pity into the breast of a savage.

Mrs. Lake charmed with her innocence, and hearing the sorrows which she had experienced, clasped her in her arms, and with a cordial and encouraging embrace, said—
“ While I live you shall never want a friend.”

Matilda in her narrative informed her how she came to incur the displeasure of her ladyship. The crimes that were laid to her charge of which she was totally innocent ; the sorrows she underwent in the castle, and the cause of her being there confined.

Mrs. Lake attentively heard her melancholy tale ;—expressed her surprise

prise, and said she could not have thought Lady Harvey would have listened to a young man she knew was so abandoned and cruel ; for that his character was well known.

Matilda begged Mrs. Lake would contrive that she should not be seen by Lady Harvey, as it would give her pain to be in company with a person who had been so cruel to her.

Mrs. Lake agreed with her desire, but as Lady Harvey and she had always been on good terms, she did not wish to offend her. My dear Matilda—continued she—I am now going to take upon myself the task of a mother, and give you advice, which I hope your good sense and discretion will induce you to follow.

Ernest

Ernest, it is true, is an idle, and has been a thoughtless, licentious youth; it is not the first time I have heard of his cruelty, but you must recollect my dear, you have neither fortune nor friends, except myself; therefore you must endeavour to conform to a situation in life, which may at first appear disagreeable. It very frequently happens that a reformed rake makes a good husband; I therefore think if he would pay his addresses to you on honourable terms, which I think he intends doing, it will be a very happy circumstance for you.

“ Alas!—exclaimed Matilda—how is it possible I can ever regard him as a husband, who has treated me in so cruel a manner.”

“ But

" But my dear — replied Mrs. Lake — if he repents, you must forgive him: he has a very large fortune, and can marry whom he pleases. I but this morning heard him say, he would never marry for interest, and at the same time hinted the good opinion he entertained of you. Therefore, as you are circumstanced, it is my opinion and advice that you should be reconciled to him, which though it may be unpleasant to your feelings at first, it will soon wear off; for time reconciles us to all things, therefore forget the unkind treatment you have met with from him, and let love plead his excuse; it is impossible his person can be disagreeable to you, or any one; for he is esteemed the Adonis of the country, and is in the very prime of youth. —

My dear—continued she—I do not wish to implant an affection for him in your bosom, I only give you the advice of a friend; were I in your situation, I think these arguments would plead strongly in his favour—do not think he is a favourite of mine—he is far from it; I only thus advise you, because I think your acquiescence will tend to your happiness."

Lady Harvey then arrived, and Matilda retired to her own room, reflecting on the conversation of Mrs. Lake; her affections were already secured by him, who seemed to return them with ardour, and who appeared highly deserving.

Ernest was a very different character from his brother, he was proud,
superstitious

Superstitious and cruel, but Edward was affable, gallant and polite to all who knew him; when she compared these brothers what a different light did the latter appear in. While she was thus meditating she saw her young friend, Mary, coming down the avenue to the house; what pleasure did it give her to see that amiable girl, the only friend she had to make the confidant of her sorrows.

Mary no sooner entered the room then Matilda flew into her arms, and cried, "Oh thou kind girl! what did I suffer when you left me last? She then told her the circumstances concerning Ernest; also Mrs. Lake's advice, and that Lady Harry was then in the house.

Mary

Mary expressed her concern, " but said she—I bring you some good tidings of your Edward. As I was returning home last night, I met him going to our house ; as soon as he saw me he appeared overjoyed, and eagerly enquired after your health. I informed him the reason you left us, but said I knew nothing of you. He seemed very much surprised and hurt ; and upbraided you of treating him with cruelty, and seemed so deeply affected and heart-broken, that I said if he wished to write or send any message, I believed you might be found. This intelligence seemed greatly to relieve him, and he begged I would call to-day with this," giving Matilda a letter, which she eagerly opened, and read as follows.

Dearest Matilda,

" When I reflect on the mis-
 " fortunes you suffer on my account,
 " it strongly pleads as an excuse for
 " your abrupt departure; but why
 " should you make him a stranger to
 " your sufferings who considers all the
 " miseries you endure as his own?
 " Is there a circumstance on earth
 " which can heighten my agonies
 " when I hear of any misfortunes
 " that hath befallen you?—only one,
 " and with that I am cursed; it is
 " the dreadful consideration that I
 " am the wretched cause, but I will
 " hazard my mother's displeasure,
 " the loss of friends and fortune to
 " make you happy; for why should
 " our cruel destiny prevent our be-
 " ing so."

Done

" Then

" Then fly my lovely angel to
 " those arms which are ever open
 " to receive and protect you, and to
 " which you are more welcome
 " without riches than if blest with
 " a splendid fortune—believe me I
 " love you better than myself, and
 " that my great and principal aim is
 " your happiness.

" In a month my vacation will
 " commence, till that time, instead
 " of being under obligations to stran-
 " gers, come to me and I will have
 " you concealed with a pair of my
 " acquaintance who will regard you
 " as their own daughter, till I leave
 " Cambridge, when under the pre-
 " tence of visiting some of my friends
 " in town, we will fly to Scotland,
 " where we will be united for ever.

"When I remember the treat-
 "ment you have met with from
 "my family, how can I hope for
 "such a blessing as your consent,
 "but pity never leaves the gentle
 "breast, therefore will never be
 "wanting in Matilda's—why should
 "I suffer for the faults of my rela-
 "tions ?

"Oh what a pang would it be,
 "to have you torn from me and
 "become the bride of another—I
 "cannot bear the thought—you
 "must—you shall be mine—excuse
 "my frenzy, dear Matilda ! but the
 "thought of losing the object of my
 "affections drives me to despair.

"How often do burning dreams
 "full my sorrows? how often do I
 "clasp the perfect resemblance of
 "your

“ your beauteous self; but when I
“ awake, how miserably am I disap-
“ pointed to find it but a dream.
“ But let me, my dearest angel. con-
“ jure you to take into your consi-
“ deration the happiness you may
“ experience, protected in the arms
“ of a husband, which, contrasted
“ with your present unprotected,
“ forlorn and dependent situation,
“ will convince you that the sure
“ road to happiness will be in be-
“ stowing your hand on

"Your devoted

“Edward Harvey.”

What could our fair one think? could she suppose that her Edward would deceive her? "Oh no!—she cried—his very words are truth, and speak comfort to my sinking heart—to think him capable of deception is

wicked ; it is charging the innocent with crimes.

“ Oh, Mary !—continued she—what a noble heart must this youth possess, to see me without friends, or fortune, abandoned and forlorn, and yet to make me so generous an offer.”

“ Consent to be his—Oh, with what pleasure shall I join my fate with his ! for in his arms do peace and comfort wait for Matilda.”

“ But whither am I wandering ? or what am I saying ? Is he not the darling son of an ambitious parent, whose happiness consists in the aggrandisement of her family ? can I for a moment think that she will consent to our wishes ? will she not rather

rather persecute me with renewed
hate?"

" Then why should I suffer such
fair hopes to invade my breast, he is
now happy in the affection of a pa-
rent, and must I step in between
and destroy that happiness? oh! no,
it must not be! my fate is decreed.
I am doomed to lead the wretched
life I have ever done since my mo-
ther's death. Oh! why do I call
that back to remembrance! oh, once
happy days, how quickly art thou
flown away!"

Mary participated in the distress of
Matilda, and endeavoured to sooth
her sorrows; entreated her not to de-
spair, flattering her with the hopes
that all would be well, for that she
was certain she would still be happy;
and

and that she should live to see her a grand lady.

Matilda had often listened to the soothings of this tender-hearted girl, and many nights had her artless endeavours drawn balmy sleep on her weary eye lids.

“ What can I hope for—said she, no parent—no friend ? ”—

“ But you have—replied Mary—a lover, whom you may be happy with, and who will protect you from your enemies, and every other misfortune.”

“ But do you not consider—said Matilda—by making me happy he will render himself miserable ; oh heavens ! how long have I indulged deluding

deluding hope, but hence, away ! no more shall your illusive promises deceive Matilda ; for if I harbour thee much longer, I shall be like the shipwrecked mariner, who climbs the rugged rock for safety, and when he has almost gained the summit, and preservation appears within his grasp ; Hope then presents itself, beams in his eye, obliterates the danger, and impels him to continue his exertions by the near prospect of safety ; but alas ! in the moment while he is thus indulging hope, the angry wave rushes forth with redoubled violence, indignant at being deprived of its prey, and drags him back to the insatiable deep."

Mary persisted in advising her to encourage the addresses of Edward, but Matilda refused, saying she would wait

wait her destiny with patience and resignation ; should she be deprived of one friend, she believed that Being in whom she should always place her trust, would provide her with another.

As to Mrs. Lake, she could consider her as no friend ; for had she really had a concern for her she never would have advised her to listen to a villain whom she detested, who had treated her with such barbarity, and whose character as an unprincipled libertine she was well acquainted with.

“ It is impossible that I could ever regard him as my husband ; we may forgive, and it is our duty, but while we retain our memory we cannot forget. To keep Mrs. Lake my friend, I must, I fear, turn dissembler, which

is

is the worst of characters to the noble mind; but the trying situation I am in, will, I trust, acquit me of any depravity of sentiment in the minds of those who are admirers of virtue.

Mary hoped she should not offend her by presuming to continue giving her advice; Matilda took her by the hand, and replied—my dear girl, why such form with me? you know I thank every one that will take the trouble of giving me advice, and surely you, who have so essentially served me, and whose friendship is so disinterested, and let me tell you, disinterested friendship is very rarely met with, is it then possible I can deem any advice from you an offence?

“ Well

"Well then Miss—said Mary—
as you are so kind as to think my
advice worth hearing, let me per-
suade you to continue where you
are; Mrs. Lake bears a very ex-
cellent character, and I dare say will
not endeavour to oblige you to do any
thing that is unpleasant. As to Mr.
Harvey, reason with him, and if you
find it has not the proper effect you
must dissemble, the task is un-
pleasant I own, but to protect our-
selves from vice I think it is ex-
cusable; to be sure a poor girl like
me cannot be such a friend as I
could wish, but any thing that lays
in my power I shall be happy to
do to render you service."

Matilda answered that her advice
and friendship soothed her sorrows,
and softened the rigour of her af-
fliction.

fictions. You are—continued she—the only person I regard, except one.—

“ Ah !—interrupted Mary—don’t be ashamed to mention who, for I think I am sure he is the handsomest young gentleman I ever saw, and his letter proves his honorable intentions towards you ; therefore, Miss, neglect not his love, he is certainly destined to make you happy, but I would not advise any lady to put herself under the protection of a gentleman, for there is no dependence on their sex, but do not think I hint at your lover ; for there are few so honorable as him. I wish all were like him.”

Here Matilda saw the tears trickling down her cheeks, she did not,

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however, enquire the meaning as she could partly guess the cause.

“ Oh !—cried Mary—would every one was like him !”

Matilda endeavoured to comfort her by saying, surely there are many as honorable as Edward, and perhaps more so ; I am—said she—not much acquainted with him to be sure—but all his sex can tell fine tales to seduce our affections.

“ Ah ! there are many indeed,— replied Mary—but they never fell in my way—but it is hard to love, and have that love disdained.”

Matilda finding her too absorbed in grief to listen to reason, changed the subject. She begged her if she met Edward

ward to inform him where she was, and the disagreeable task she was going to perform.

Mary interrupted her by saying—
 “ I hope you will excuse me if I remind you with what politeness and respect he treated you, therefore let me beg, as I know it will give him so much pleasure, that you will write a note to him, and perhaps as I go home I may meet him.

Matilda thanked her for reminding her of the politeness due to him, and wrote the following letter.

“ Sir,
 “ Your kind offer, and the many hazards you run on my account gives me more pain than my own misfortunes. I thank you for giving

“ me such kind advice, and heartily
“ wish it was in my power to ac-
“ cept it. I am again unhappily, in
“ the hands of your brother, who
“ seems to repent of his former con-
“ duct so much, that the other day
“ he offered me his hand and heart;
“ but it is impossible that I could
“ listen to his addresses, were my
“ affections not already bestowed
“ on one who honors me with a
“ return,—his unmanly and bar-
“ barous treatment can never be
“ obliterated from my memory. I at
“ present perform the horrid task
“ of dissembling with him, as I find
“ it the only way to secure myself
“ from his persecutions, and make
“ myself comfortable in this asylum.

“ Mrs. Lake persuades me to re-
“ ceive his addresses, but should
“ cruel

"cruel fortune prevent me having
 "those I love, I will continue single,
 "and as I regard your happiness let
 "me entreat you to take into consi-
 "deration the many ills that will
 "attend our unhappy attachment, and
 "think no more on the unfortunate
 "Matilda."

After she had wrote these lines she gave them to Mary, who promised to call again in a day or two, and begged Matilda in that time to make herself happy, as she was sure no harm could happen to her in Mrs. Lake's house.

prized on top of mountains,
and over the land of deserts,
and accident after accident has been
met with, and of late months
How stiff and unyielding now is
the human frame, and how

CHAP. II.

A Melancholy Accident.

MARY now left Matilda to ruminate on Edward's letter, and the misfortunes she saw approach her; she feared it would be impossible to stay at Mrs. Lake's, as it would not be in her power long to practise dissimulation—it was an art her

her noble mind disdained—it was a vulgar trick she scorned. She therefore determined the next time Mrs. Lake gave her advice, or Ernest introduced his horrid passion no longer to dissemble, but declare her rooted aversion to him, and if she by so doing should offend, trust to providence for a friend to protect her; but little did she imagine the trial was so near.

She set musing on these thoughts, when she heard some body rap at the door, and Ernest immediately entered the room. His sudden appearance agitated her so much that she did not know what answer to make him.

“ Matilda—said he—you promised to consider of my unhappy fate. I hope a sincere repentance for my former

former errors, and my present behaviour will induce you to think favourably of my addresses.'

" Sir—replied the unfortunate Matilda—deception is so mean and despicable that I cannot practise it ; then be not angry with me for telling my real determination. You have in vain endeavoured to conquer me, but I am too open, too frank to deceive you : remember your former treatment to Matilda, and then think if it is possible she can regard you as a husband.—Be a friend to a poor orphan, and as such I will ever esteem you—to hold you in any other light is impossible—toil not, nor waste your time upon Matilda ; she is not worth your care. If time hangs heavy on your hands, Maria Hodges claims

claims your reflection; go to her sad grave, and with the tears of penitence bedew her tomb."

He made no reply, but with apparent horror left the room.

Matilda wondered at his silence, but her wonder was soon encreased; for as she was standing at her window she heard the report of a pistol which alarmed her exceedingly, as she was no stranger to the desperation of her disappointed lover.

She instantly flew to the door, and met Sukey running and crying, "Oh God! what are we to do?—is it your fault?—they all say it is.—oh! how I am shocked! was ever any thing so horrid! yet he looks so lovely.—Oh, how could you have the heart

to

to be so cruel to the poor young gentleman?—he has shot himself!"

"I do not understand what you say."

Matilda was struck dumb with surprise and astonishment, and ere she could recover Lady Harvey entered the room, and seizing her by the hair, dragged her to the body of Ernest.

"There, you wretch—said she—see what thou hast done! you have caused the death of the noblest youth that e'er this cruel world contained; cruel, indeed, to take away my boy, my Ernest from me! Oh heavens! have I endured all the anxious cares of a mother, and to have it come to this!"—Distraction now seized her brain, and she fell breathless by the body of her son.

Mr.

Mr. Lake turning to Matilda gave her a letter, and in a severe tone commanded her to leave the room; she retired and with horror read the following letter.

“ Oh, thou too lovely fair ! can you forgive a wretch who has severely attoned for all his faults, by bitter remorse.

“ Death I would gladly embrace ; were it not for the dread of a future punishment—what account can I give to that awful Judge in Heaven ?—the very idea shocks my soul !—what am I to say ?—that I was the cause of Matilda’s sufferings, because she would not tread in the paths of dishonour— Oh, pity me ! although I have been such

" Such a wretch—pity my folly,
 " and intercede with the supreme !
 " Being to have mercy on a youth
 " who repents." How bus bethor est
.7533ol gniwollof

" The wicked man is terrified at
 " the thoughts of death, but those
 " who have led an honorable life hail
 " him as a comforter.—Oh, God !
 " no such comforts can sooth my
 " anguish !—I have dipt my hands
 " too deep in guilt.

" You mentioned—how can I
 " write that name ?—I will—yet,
 " stay—my hand trembles, my pen
 " falls from me, and I blot my pa-
 " per with tears. Shall I utter that
 " name—I must, you knew the
 " lovely Maria then ? Oh ! that Maria
 " was a virtuous maid !—she was
 like

“ like Matilda, till I—forbear the
 “ rest, you too well can guess—yet
 “ she was not like you ; she was not
 “ aware of the deceitfulness of man.

“ Alas ! she little suspected that
 “ when a woman gives up her vir-
 “ tue the very wretch who seduces
 “ her is the first who will upbraid
 “ her of her folly ; and, vain of his
 “ triumph, expose her to the world.

“ With confusion I must confess that
 “ I am one of that horde of villains,
 “ yet pity me—fancy you see me
 “ soaring on the wings of hope to
 “ Heaven, where that merciful Be-
 “ ing—merciful to all, but a wretch
 “ like me—drives me from his pre-
 “ fence and precipitates me to the
 “ abyss below, there gasping for
 “ breath

“ breath and mercy, I must crave
 “ your pardon.

“ When I think on this, can I die?
 “ —yet I am resolved—that time
 “ must and will arrive—ere you re-
 “ ceive this, the once gallant Ernest
 “ will be no more. Those eyes which
 “ have gazed on the beauties of Ma-
 “ tilda—that tongue which uttered
 “ such soft deceiving tales will be
 “ consigned to the dust.”

“ Inform Miss Brown, who assist-
 “ ed me in calumniating your spot-
 “ less character—but, indeed, it was
 “ more her crime than mine—tell
 “ her that form, the idol of her soul, |
 “ will shortly become the prey of
 “ worms—methinks while I write
 “ I see their heads peep above the
 “ earth and their mouths open in
 “ anxious

“ anxious waiting for the object of
“ her affection.”

“ Merey, heavens! what poor
“ mortals we are, Ernest Harvey
“ who now relates his horrid tale
“ will soon become the food of rep-
“ tiles.”

“ You cannot say that I was vain
“ of my person, though I have long
“ been convinced Miss Brown has
“ most ardently sighed for the ex-
“ clusive possession of it—I should
“ not boast of my triumph over her
“ but she is Matilda’s enemy.”

“ To compensate in some degree
“ for the injuries you have sustained
“ by me, thou heavenly maid! let
“ me conjure you to accept my for-
“ tune, it is all I can bestow, and

“ will I hope serve as a token of my
“ sincere repentance.

“ If you wish my family to par-
“ take of what I here bequeath, be-
“ stow it upon Edward ; I believe
“ he tenderly loves Matilda, and
“ prizes her esteem before all the
“ riches this world can afford ; but he
“ too possessest that art which belongs
“ to our sex, trust him not too
“ much—beware, I say beware.—a-
“ dieu, thou lovely and much injured
“ sweetness, forgive and pray for
“ the undone

“ E. Harvey.”

When Matilda had finished this melancholy letter, she threw herself on the bed and bemoaned his hapless fate thro' the tedious midnight hours ; all his cruelty was now

now forgotten, and her anger changed to pity and forgiveness.

She accused herself of cruelty in making him unhappy, then again would she say, " why should I make myself miserable to render others happy ? The horrid catastrophe of Ernest's letter and her own critical situation kept her awake all the night.

Early in the morning Sukey came and acquainted her with what had happened in the family since the accident, and warn her against the dangers that seemed to threaten her. She informed her that lady Harvey was taken home raving mad, soon after she retired; and that both Mr. and Mrs. Lake vowed vengeance against her for not taking their ad-

vice ; " therefore, Miss—said she—let me advise you. Go to Mr. Edward ; tell him what has happened ; I have heard from Mary of the generous offer he has made you, let me then perjuade you to accept it : you are much to blame if you do not, as it is not in my power to be of any further service to you, therefore, sooner than continue in the power of strangers, be sheltered by the protection of a husband ; for wherever you go, while you are single you will always be persecuted by one or another."

Matilda was convinced of the impropriety of continuing where she was, with respect of enjoying any comfort, or peace of mind ; she therefore followed Sukey's advice ; taking with her what things she should want,

want, and promised to send to her for the rest in a day or two.

She left the house with a heart bursting with grief.—sighs and tears were the sole companions of her journey; she had not wandered long before she found herself in a place suited as it were by nature for her to vent her sorrows; it was a wood through which serpented a limpid stream, whose soothing murmurs and refreshing coolness invited our hapless fair to lay down by it, and rest her aching head.

“ Oh, Heavens!—she exclaimed—whither am I roving?—what new dangers am I courting?—what will the world say of me?—or, what can I think of myself? to live under the protection of a lover! I, that have

have always trod so strictly in the paths of virtue—Is it possible that I can stoop to a thing so mean, so dishonourable, and so inimical to all my former resolutions.”

“ No! here will I end my wretched days!—within this desart wood, and here on an unconscious tree will I engrave my sorrows; perhaps when I remain a breathless corpse, some poor nymph deserted by all who knew her, a wretched outcast like myself, may chance to stray this way; or perhaps some love-lorn swain; then may they learn the sufferings of Matilda.”

Here she paused awhile, but presently a recollection of her woes, drove her almost to desperation, and starting on her feet, she exclaimed,

“ here

“ here will I end my sorrows, this water shall be Matilda’s grave!” and with these words she was about to plunge herself into the stream, when hearing a rustling amongst the trees, she turned her head, and to her utter astonishment, within a few paces of her, beheld Edward.

The sight of her lover and the thought of future punishment prevented her committing this rash act, and she sunk motionless on the ground.

The moment Edward perceived his beloved Matilda, he flew to her, embraced her, and with much surprise and tenderness enquired the cause of her indisposition, and the reason of her being there alone.

“ Alas!—

" Alas! — said she, timidly raising her lovely eyes — I thought of coming to you, for I have melancholy news to tell you — Ah! — he answered — I am acquainted with the dreadful story, my brother Henry sent a servant yesterday to inform me of poor Ernest's untimely fate. Happy — he added — would it have been for him, had he not been my mother's favourite, who indulged him in his infancy to that degree, that when he grew up she could not restrain his vicious courses; indeed she was always blind to his faults."

Matilda could not conceal her surprise to hear him mention that unfortunate young man without the least mark of fraternal regard, which he perceiving, awkwardly dissembled, and pretended to lament his death.

He raised Matilda gently from the ground; and conducted her trembling steps to a small house, about half a mile from the spot where he had found her, pleasantly situated in a grove. He told her that this was the house he had mentioned to her in his letter, that she would remain there in safety. He then introduced her to his friends, who treated her with all the politeness of a new guest.

The family consisted of a young gentleman, a fellow-collegian of Edward's, a young lady who passed for his wife, and one woman fervant. The appearance of these people gave Matilda no small uneasiness, as in the first place, Edward had deceived her by representing them to her in his letter as elderly people, and in the latter, the behaviour of the young lady

lady soon convinced her that she was a very improper companion for her; and gave her great reason to suspect that she was one of those who did not properly appreciate the inestimable value of a virtuous inclination. Their abode instead of being concealed as he had described, was merely a rendezvous for all the gentlemen of the university.

Matilda had been here a week, and Edward had observed the most marked respect towards her, as well as the master and mistress of the house, so that the disagreeable impressions which she had at first felt, began to wear off; when a messenger came to inform him of his mother's death. This caused Matilda to be left entirely to the protection of strangers. Edward soothed her somewhat by the

the most solemn protestations that he would at his return make her his for ever.

She expressed her dissatisfaction at the manner of the young lady's conduct, to whose care she was to be confided; but Edward endeavoured to do away her apprehensions, and told her that however light and flighty she might appear, that she was strictly honourable and virtuous.

" She is—continued he—the daughter of a man of large fortune, whom she has greatly disengaged, by marrying, without his consent, a gentleman of small patrimony, and only lives secluded in this retirement till she comes of age."

“ The old people whom I mentioned to you in my letter, suddenly left the country, before she quitted her father’s house, or she meant to have taken up her residence with them.”

Matilda’s doubts and fears were now no more; she was certain that her Edward would not deceive her; they bid each other a tender adieu for a short time, and Matilda begged Edward would, as he passed Mrs. Holmes’, enquire after Mary; which he readily promised to do.

Our forlorn maid was now left alone to her own thoughts, and a gleam of hope and happiness at present seemed to shine on this exalted virgin; she also began to entertain a more favourable

avourable opinion of the family she was with.

It was now a considerable time since she had heard from Mary, and was much surprised and concerned at it, as she could not by any means account for her silence; and as she knew where to find Edward, she might have apprized him if any accident had happened to her. She retired early, but was alarmed at midnight with the cry of murder! which terrified her so much that she jumped out of bed, and ran to the servant, who lay in the next room, to enquire from whence it proceeded.

“ Oh, la Miss!—said she—don’t be frightened, it is only my master and mistress a fighting.”

H 2 “ Fighting!—

“ Fighting !—replied Matilda, with astonishment.

“ O, la, maam ! you must not mind these little disturbances.”

Matilda was much shocked, however she retired to bed, and endeavoured to make herself as easy as possible.

The next morning Matilda was convinced that the account the maid gave her of the disturbance was true, as the gentleman had a scratched face, and other marks of combat, this occurrence gave her a very unfavourable idea of matrimony.

Upon Edward’s return, Matilda acquainted him with the unpleasant situation she had been placed in; when

when he pretended great surprise at their improper conduct, but said he would soon release her from it, and place her in a more eligible situation.

“ I am extremely sorry—added he—that I have been obliged to absent myself so long from you; but my mother’s death has deranged the affairs of the family so much that my brother and I shall have great difficulty in settling them.”

He then gave her a melancholy account of his mother’s death; and said that it gave him inexorable concern to find that in her last moments she raved so inveterately against her; but my dearest life—added he—I am sorry we are to have so long a journey before we can be united, as my

mother has left her will in so strange a manner, that I am restricted from marrying till I have completed my twenty-first year; therefore we must continue in Scotland till that time, in retirement; and where no doubt, we shall be as happy as though we lived in the gaiety and splendour of the metropolis.—what says my angel?"

" Oh !—replied Matilda—if you are happy, I must be so; but you have not told me whether you have enquired after Mary?"

" Right—said he—I had forgot, I called on her mother, who told me that she was gone to her uncle in Yorkshire; that she did not expect her to return for some months; but I cannot conceive what it is
you

you want, so very particularly with her?"

Matilda thought the question odd, but took no farther notice than saying, that as Mary had rendered her so many services at the risk of her mother's displeasure, who was a very violent woman, that she should hold herself very ungrateful in not wishing to see her, or at least hear from her.

Edward smilingly replied—" that indeed he should be jealous if she had a regard for any body besides himself."

Here their conversation was interrupted by Henry: Matilda was obliged to step into a closet to prevent his seeing her. When he entered

tered the room, he looked round him with an enquiring eye, and then asked his brother what he had done with Matilda? “ for I thought—said he—I saw her here?”

“ Alas! my brother—added the noble-minded youth—I hope you have not deceived that unfortunate young creature; if you have, or if you do, depend upon it you will never prosper. You have now a large fortune, marry her, she is handsome, sensible and well-educated, therefore you cannot be ashamed of introducing her into the world; it is what my unfortunate brother would have been proud to have done.”

“ Mary has—here Edward prevented his saying any more by beginning

ging he would take a turn in the garden, and Matilda was left to meditate on this unpleasant discovery; she foresaw her lover's confusion at the advice of his brother, she imagined that she also perceived a mystery concerning Mary; for she had been told many different tales respecting her; it seemed he did not like her to have so kind a friend.

She often blamed herself for trusting so much to merciless, designing man; but the want of friends and fortune pleaded her excuse; these melancholy reflections threw her into tears, and upon Edward's return, he enquired the cause.

“ What, I suppose—said he—my brother Henry's interruption, and fine harangue have made you unhappy:

easy; but, come, banish these uncomfortable fears and apprehensions, for ere long we will be united and happy."

" Alas!—replied Matilda—I have often been disappointed, and 'tis not impossible but that some unforeseen circumstance, or some more eligible match may alienate your affections from me."

" To do away these idle fears—said the deceitful youth—to-morrow shall end your doubts; be ready early in the morning, to set off on our journey to Scotland; where, united in the bands of wedlock, we may enjoy peace and happiness, and these unpleasant suspicions I shall never more disturb your peace."

Matilda's

Matilda's hopes were now raised to the highest pitch: "sure—she cried—blest with my Edward, I must be happy; he is all my hope—all my wish, my only looked-for joy.— She now took her leave and retired, promising to be ready early in the morning.

She now went to bed where the thought of her approaching happiness soon lulled all her faculties into a peaceful slumber.

At day-break she arose, when she saw the chaise already at the door and Edward ready to receive her; He asked Matilda whether she had any idea of the road to Scotland, and he with pleasure heard that she was entirely unacquainted with any part of it.

It

It would be needless to trouble the reader with an account of their journey, as nothing particular happened for two days, but on the third they put up at an inn, where they could not procure any beds, as they were all occupied; Edward said he did not mind setting up all night himself, but that the lady was very much fatigued, and therefore hoped that they would endeavour to accommodate her with one.

The landlady said she could not, unless the young lady would descend to sleep with the bar-maid; as the girl seemed tolerable decent, Matilda made no objection: when she was retiring, Edward cautioned her against mentioning to the servant where she was going, as it might lead to a discovery.

When

When she retired to rest some conversation passed between her and the girl, who appeared a little loquacious; she began with descanting on the beauties of her country; and asked Matilda if she was ever in Wales before.

“ Before?—replied our fair unfortunate, hastily—no—what do you mean by Wales?”

“ Mean—quoth the girl—I mean nothing; only this is the direct road to it; and the gentleman said you were going to Wales; for I heard him ask Mrs. Mitchell, my mistress, which was the most private road to it.”

Matilda took no notice, but concealed her surprise from the girl, though her thoughts on this strange story made her extremely uneasy, and kept her waking all night.

In the morning when she saw Edward, she told him what the girl had said. He laughed, and said, he supposed the young woman saw they were a run-away couple, and did it to frighten her.

This, the deceived Matilda thought very likely, and the rest of the day they spent in viewing the country, and the day after they set off on their pretended matrimonial journey.

Just as Matilda was getting into the chaise, Edward begged her to step back for a moment, as he had something very particular to say, which was to tell her that she had better deliver the will, which Ernest had left with her, to him before their marriage; as it was of too much consequence to travel with it, and that he would place it in the hands of a confidential person to take care of it and the mortal coil. And so it was. Matilda readily, and without any suspicion, gave it him. They had not proceeded above a mile on their way, before the chaise broke down; this accident obliged them to return to the inn, where they continued a week under the pretence of the chaise not being repaired.

Edward's attentions to Matilda lessened daily, and he treated her somewhat less respectfully than he had done.

She soon perceived the alteration, and was now convinced that he had brought her towards Wales instead of going to Scotland.

"Good Heavens!—said she— with what intention can he have brought me here, if I am deceived, where, oh, where shall I hide my wretched head! who is there to succour and protect the forlorn Matilda!"

These ideas prest on her mind so strongly, that she resolved to expostulate with him the next morning.

She

She rose early, and as they were at breakfast, but afflicted fair-one burst into tears; upon Edward's enquiring into the cause, she fell upon her knees and weeping said, "oh, my Edward! you have brought me into a strange country, with the promise of being your wife: why am I then deceived; why this treachery; and why am I brought to Wales instead of Scotland!"

This interrogation overwhelmed him with confusion, and he drew from her, as tho' he wished to avoid making any answer; but she caught him by the hand, "oh, Edward!—she cried—turn not from me; what have I done to be a detested object in your sight; cruel, perfidious youth! I read my fate plainly in your obdurate

heart—I 3 countenance—

countenance—could I ever imagine that Edward would have served me thus;—no!—had an angel descended from heaven and told me that you would have been false, I could not have believed him.”

“Tell me, whether you dare be virtuous and make me your happy bride; or are you ashamed to fulfil your promise?—am I to continue the forlorn, distressed, Matilda?—speak, and look not thus upon me, but doom me to everlasting misery, or happiness.”

“Alas!—replied the dissembler—thou dear object of my affections, I never till yesterday examined my mother’s will; but there I find that if I marry you before I am of age I shall

I shall be deprived of my fortune, therefore consider—will it not be more prudent for us to live together till that time arrives ; our conduct shall be so circumspect that no one need know but that we are married—live without you I cannot, nor will not—you must, and shall be mine."

Matilda was all this time on the ground at his feet, but his last words filled her with astonishment and horror; and a virtuous resentment pervaded her whole frame : She arose, and looking indignantly upon him ; "What—said she—do'st thou dare to think that Matilda will swerve from the paths of virtue ? No, I will maintain it to my last moment. Shall it be said that Matilda's example ever

gave

gave countenance to the perpetration of crimes which her soul abhors. Oh, no! rather would I wander, a wretched outcast, and gain my daily bread from the alms of the benevolent, and destitute of shelter, expose my tender frame to the inclemency of the pitiless storm."

Then in a sort of frenzy, she exclaimed—"Oh, heavens! where am I—sure in Hell, and all the fiends are dancing round my distracted head! Oh, my God, why hath thou forsaken a wretched virgin! who has never offended thee! for what hast thou reserved me? surely for some untimely end, and now it is come.—I would not undergo such another hour she added for worlds of wealth."

I shall

I shall never more experience happiness—my fondest, dearest hopes are destroyed, and vanished into air.

How often, when sorrow, my constant companion has overwhelmed my heart, has the flattering idea that I should at last be happy, with the youth I loved, soothed my cares.

I was born to be a wretched outcast ; my destiny has been peculiarly cruel, indeed, why did I put so much confidence in merciless man ? or, why was I forced to leave my father's house ? surely within those walls I might have hoped for protection ; but ah, no ! did he not cause all my sorrows, did he not wish to abandon his own daughter to infamy and ruin —sure he cannot be my father,

ther, the ties of nature would have pleaded in my defence—but all his cruelty does not equal this deceiver. Was ever virgin so betrayed, or was ever man so cruel? “Oh, where is the faith you plighted, those vows, those dear delusions with which you once charmed the fond heart of Matilda—all gone—all dead to pity.”

While the distressed Matilda was thus bewailing her fate, and his cruelty, he stood as though struck with astonishment and shame.

“Sure—continued Matilda—you cannot possibly descend to so unworthy, base and pitiful an action, as

to keep the evidence of my rights, which in an unguarded moment you have artfully obtained from me. It is now you have deceived me, the only dependance I have—sure, if you have any spark of honour, you cannot refuse this just request."

Here Edward's speech found utterance—" You do not surely intend to leave me, for the sake of that idle, antiquated ceremony—in time if you wish to be my bride, it will be in my power to make you so—at present it is not, I wish it was, think coolly therefore on the subject, and let your reason guide you a little."

" I mean it—replied Matilda—interrupting him—virtue and reason shall ever be my guides—return me
my

my fortune—will you, or will you not condescend to give the maid whom you have rendered so miserable, a positive answer."

" Be not so precipitate, Matilda—replied the hypocrite—your demand requires some consideration; Ernest was certainly insane when he bequeathed his fortune to you; indeed, the act of suicide proves it. A man that will destroy himself can never be in his senses, however, I shall leave it to the determination of my brother, but it is a matter of no significance, therefore I would advise you to make yourself happy and contented in being protected in the arms of a youth who admires you; and leave off such old fashioned, prudish

Lectures about virtue and such non-sense."

Matilda seeing herself thus insulted would not deign to return an answer, but left the room.

or instances when necessary. **THE**
so far gainst the world. **H**
soft power no man with you to match
such base plotters and hypocrites and
diseases such as you are fit to be
and to stamp out the yoke of
such horrid swine. **THE**

VOL. II.

K

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Meets with great kindness from Mrs. Michell.

HER situation now appeared to her in the most alarming shape, deserted by the man on whom she had placed her affections ; and that too in a strange country, and bereft, by his perfidy, of the bequest of Ernest, which would have secured her

an ample independance—reduced to misery and wretchedness, she summoned up resolution sufficient to make the Hostess of the inn acquainted with her misfortunes.

Oh, gentle reader ! think what must be the sufferings of this unfortunate virgin ; so far from home, and no friend to confide in—no house to shelter her—no refuge wherein to vent her sorrows ! How keen must be the sensations within her breast ? her only hope of happiness in one short hour destroyed.

In this sad situation what could she do, she was compelled to expose her sorrows to a stranger—but fortunately was it for her, one who possessed a large portion of humanity.

With tears of sympathy in her eye she listened to the distressing tale, and entered so strongly into her interests that she almost made her think that she was with a second Mary.

Edward no sooner saw that Matilda had found a friend, than, either ashamed of his cruel conduct, or afraid of losing what he had so ungenerously obtained from her, hastily left the inn and Matilda to finish the wretched scene alone.

Mrs. Michell now generously entreated that Matilda would tell her how she might be serviceable to her; she offered to send her back to Cambridge; or if she would stay with her, she should think herself highly honoured, and would endeavour to make

make her situation as comfortable as possible.

An inn was an unpleasaint residence, but Matilda was obliged to over look its disagreeableness, and think herself happy in being sheltered from the dews of night and the inclemencies of the weather.

Mrs. Michell endeavoured to sooth her grief, and treated her with all the tenderness of a near relation ; indeed, to describe the kindness of this good woman is a task my pen is not equal to, but the last and most trying misfortune was so strongly impressed on her heart, that it was not easily overcome.

Matilda now saw herself bereft of all the comforts of life, and often

times would she seek out some unfrequented shade, and there bemoan her hapless fate.

“ Oh, ye powers above!—she cried—assist a wretched maid; drive from her remembrance the perjured youth who hath robbed her of her affections—if I have committed a crime in loving him who has deceived me, oh, pardon me!—the glimmering lamp of life will soon waste away, and I, and my sorrows will ere long be laid in the grave, and like an old story buried in oblivion.”

What poor mortals we are! how soon are all our beauty and perfections gone—in one short hour—snatched from

from their blooming owner, and heard of no more.

When will that time arrive for me?—Life is of short duration; but with the miserable it seems painfully long—perhaps, when I am a cold, breathless corps, Edward will walk over the dust of his once deceived Matilda, and, sighing, say I repent, yet would the kind Goddess of pity let his tears bedew my grave—oh, would she pierce the dart of throbbing repentance through his flinty heart, it would make amends for Matilda's sorrows.

In these melancholy retreats, one evening a new disaster happened to her, which occasioned her great uneasiness—the picture which her mother

ther had cautioned her to preserve with so much care, by some means or other fell from her neck, and though she searched for it with the greatest perseverance and made all possible enquiry after it, no tidings could she hear of it, which rendered her inconsolable—it was very remarkable for on the back of it was engraved Lord S—. Matilda had frequently revolved this circumstance in her mind, but could never come to any satisfactory conclusion respecting it, as she knew that her mother had no relation of that title.

It now happened that a nobleman, whose title corresponded with the initials on the back of the picture, frequented the inn kept by Mrs. Michell, and Matilda had often observed

served that he bore a strong resemblance to the picture.

She sometimes thought of acquainting his lordship of this circumstance; but as he had never taken even the slightest notice of her—Prudence and a modest diffidence which diffused a crimson blush over her lovely countenance whenever she entertained the idea of accosting him, prevented her.

She experienced so much kindness where she now was that she had no thoughts of leaving her benevolent friend, Mrs. Michell: indeed, whenever she mentioned the least circumstance that could by any means be construed into an intention of returning to Cambridge, though that period

period was ever so distant, it seemed to give her pain; for she really testified as strong an affection for Matilda as though she had been her own offspring.

By degrees her natural beauty returned, which sorrow, that corroding fiend, had much impaired; and for a time had deprived her charms of displaying their finest colours.

Time reconciled her to the deceitfulness of a lover, who now in her eyes appeared a most despicable object, unworthy her consideration, and whom she hoped she should never think on more, but with detestation.

With this resolution, the comforts of a home, and the tender solicitude of

of Mrs. Michell to anticipate her wishes, she became tolerably happy; and in a short time the cloud of sorrow wore away.

Sometimes a few melancholy reflections would intrude themselves on her mind, when she would retire to her solitary retreat, which was a beautiful shady grove adjoining to the inn.

One evening as she was walking rather late, listening to the soft and melancholy tales of the nightingale, she was on a sudden disturbed by the voices of some people at a distance, who seemed to be deeply engaged in conversation; and fancying that she heard them mention her name, she was prompted by curiosity

try to listen. With trembling step she drew nearer the sound; and overheard the following discourse:

“ Only contrive to deliver Matilda to my master, and he will reward you handsomely; if you don’t do it, some one else will, and I don’t know why you should not be the better for it as well as a stranger.”

“ My master says, that his brother died for this girl; but he is no such fool;—if we could but once get her into our power, it would be very easy to take her to some retired seat of his, where I warrant you we would keep her snug enough.”

“ Well—replied the other, which seemed to be a woman’s voice—I can’t

can't see why we should not comply with your master's wishes; I am sure it will be much better for Matilda—here they lowered their discourse, so that she heard no more,

As she had thus fortunately discovered this base plan, her next business was to discover who these clever schemers were; when presently by the glimmering light of the moon, which peeped through the trees, she had the extreme mortification to find it was the bar-maid in league with Edward's man.

The unfortunate Matilda was extremely shocked, as she had always entertained a good opinion of this woman, and she was grievously vexed at finding herself mistaken.

Terrified at the plot which these wretches were projecting against her, she ran in and told Mrs. Michell; but she had so very good an opinion of her servant, that notwithstanding her affection for Matilda, she declared that without the most convincing proofs, she would not believe any thing against her.

Matilda entreated her to step into the grove where she made no doubt but they still were together, and then she might herself witness the truth of what she had informed her.

Mrs. Michell with some difficulty permitted Matilda to conduct her to the spot where they were still conversing: She heard them determine on a plan to surprise and carry off the unfortunate

unfortunate Matilda, and if possible to put it in execution the very next morning.

Mrs. Michell was so much astonished at the perfidy and wickedness of her servant, that she was almost unwilling to believe her senses, but the discovery was so certain, and the fact stared her so full in the face, that she could not be mistaken.

She therefore, as soon the woman returned, upbraided her with her baseness, and immediately discharged her from her service. She then embraced Matilda and begged that she would never go out alone, which she cheerfully complied with.

While she remained with Mrs Michell, several gentleman of rank and fortune, who occasionally had seen her, when they put up at the inn, proffered their services to her, and would have thought themselves supremely happy, could they have obtained Matilda's love.

Amongst them was one, who more than any other particularised himself in his attentions to our fair heroine. He was a young nobleman, and son of Lord S.— who, as before observed, so much resembled the picture which Matilda had lost from her neck. His deportment was the most respectful towards her; and it was with a diffidence bordering on modest bashfulness, that he addressed her.

She

She refused his suit, saying, that she had been once deceived, and that as there was too great a disparity between them, she would take care not to be deceived a second time.

Her admirers finding her inexorable to their tender tales, gave up their suit one by one. Matilda for a little time enjoyed peace and tranquility, but some new disaster constantly befel this hapless fair.

One day as she was sitting with Mrs. Michell in the bar, a man genteelly drest came in. The moment he saw Matilda, with seeming surprise and astonishment, he thus addressed her:

L 3 "Why,

“ Why, Jenny, how the devil did you get here? I have advertised you; I have been running up and down from county to county, in hopes of finding you, and had now given up all thoughts of ever setting my eyes upon you again. Don’t you think you have a great deal to answer for? thus to leave a good husband, who adored you, and run away with a wicked young fellow; what excuse can you make for such conduct?”

The man had his own way, and went on as he pleased for a considerable time without interruption; for Matilda was so much surprised at his accosting her in such terms, that she could do nothing but stand and gaze

gaze at him with stedfast astonishment.

Mrs. Michell first found her tongue, and pushing him from Matilda asked him what he meant by talking in such a strain to a person who was a stranger to him; for she knew the lady that he had addressed himself to in such a rude manner, had no husband, nor had she ever been married.

" You have been deceived madam— replied the man—whoever told you so, had their reasons for imposing on your credulity; she has been my wife more than a year, and taking hold of Matilda, swore she should go with him that instant.

Matilda

Matilda had only the power to say, "I never saw your face before", and fell into a chair half dead with terror.

The man persisted in his assertions that she was his lawful wife; and supported his pretensions with such obstinacy, and adduced so many, apparently, incontrovertible proofs, and collateral circumstances, that he succeeded in inducing every one at the inn to believe his story, and that this unfortunate maid was his wife.

Mrs. Michell was so firmly convinced, by his feasible story, that she reproached the senseless Matilda for having deceived her, and had not Lord S.— opportunely came in, she certainly would have been delivered to the man, who called himself her husband,

husband, and dragged to an unknown fate.

A ghastly paleness overspread Matilda's face, and the dews of death lay on her forehead; her situation drew compassion from the breast of his lordship, who instantly interposed; he said that he was certain the young lady was not the person he was in search of; but that if he could produce the certificate of their marriage, and bring any respectable character who would identify the person of the young woman as his wife, he should no longer oppose his taking her with him: but till then he was determined to protect her from the hands of one whom he feared would prove a villain.

The

The ruffian said that no man on earth should prevent him from having his wife, no, not the king himself; he thanked God that if he was now prevented by force from taking her with him, that the laws of his country would do him justice.

Matilda recovered just time enough to hear him finish the sentence, when throwing herself on her knees, she fervently implored the almighty's protection; then turning to the people, who were gathered round her "believe me—said she—I never saw this man's face before; he is certainly disordered in his mind, or harbours some cruel intentions against an orphan, who has no one to succour her, or look to for protection."

edT

" How

“ How dare you—cried the man —deny your husband—then smoothing the ferocity of his countenance he in a softer accent continued—the man whose whole affections were centered on you—who adored you—who never offended you.”

“ Oh, Jenny! think what I must have suffered! —repent, and return with me. I am willing to take you back to that home, which you have thought too humble; and saying these words he forced tears from his eyes.

The company now began to waver in their opinion towards him, whom they thought the deserted husband, and who now came in for his share of compassion; but Lord S. said, that the man must be either a fool or a mad-

man

man to take such trouble after a woman who could have no regard for him.

“ Alas, Sir !—answered the dissembling villain—my affection is, unfortunately for me, so great for that faithless unfeeling woman, that I am ready to forgive her absconding from me, and will take her home, and treat her with all possible tenderness, and I am sure that when I can reason with her alone, that she will acknowledge her errors, which shall all be buried in oblivion.”

“ I have a chaise now ready at the door, and if entreaties will not awake you to a sense of your duty, I command you, madam, to return home to look a tortoise ed from with us.”

with me this instant to your deserted home and family."

Matilda, finding that by his hypocritical appearance of distress, and feigned tenderness for her, that he had gained over the company to his side, threw her arms round Mrs. Michell's neck, and cried—"here will I hang till torn from you; for you are my last, my only hope."

do not bring me any longer into such

Mrs. Michell endeavoured to disengage herself from her, saying, "Indeed, I can do nothing for you, do not deceive me any longer, madam, but return with your husband; repent of your former conduct, and let your future behaviour be such that he may forget your faults, which will become you far better

than running away with a young fellow."

Matilda again earnestly entreated her to believe what she said, adding; indeed, I have no husband ; this man is set on by some one to get me into their power, when God only knows what will be my fate. Alas ! Matilda's fate is hard indeed !

Here the pretended husband took her in his arms in order to force her into the chaise.

She now became desperate; raved, tore her hair, and exclaimed, " Oh, villain ! villain ! then most piteously addressed the spectators, but all to no purpose, and she nearly fainted away in his arms.—" Oh ! — said the man — this

—this is another misfortune, poor woman! she has these fits sometimes, which render her quite delirious."

Matilda's efforts increased, and she struggled so hard to preserve herself from ruin, that two men were obliged to assist in forcing her into the chaise—thus was virtue endeavouring to conquer, and free herself from vice.

At length her strength failed her, and she was going to her last home; for such was Matilda's noble mind, that sooner than part with her virtue, she was determined to part with life; therefore she resolved, as she knew that she was going to ruin not to out-live her shame.

She now entreated her persecutor, as it was the last trouble she should give, that he would permit her to speak to Mrs. Michell, which request he was pleased to indulge her in.

“ Alas !—said Matilda—you was once kind to me, extend that kindness now ; it is the last request I have to make—I am totally ignorant whither, or to whom I am going, unless it is through the machinations of the perfidious Edward I am forced from you ; but if you find the picture I lost, I shall be happy, and meet my approaching fate with greater resignation—it was the gift of a dying parent.—”

Lord

Lord S. who still stood at the chaise door, turned pale, and earnestly said "whose picture was it you lost ?

" Alas—replied Matilda—I know not, but I have often thought that it resembled you, and what is more remarkable it has the initials of your name on the back of it. My mother gave it to me a few minutes before she died, and told me to preserve it with the greatest care; as it might hereafter prove the means of rendering me happy for life."

" Is it possible—exclaimed Lord S.—it is, it must be my child—my long lost Matilda—good Heavens, am I then abetting in the persecution and ruin of my own child! with

these words he forced open the door of the chaise, and Matilda sprung into his arms,—crying, my father! Oh, my father!

“I am—I am your father—he replied, pressing her to his bosom—here—continued he—is the picture which you lost? presenting it to her.”

“It is, it is the same—replied Matilda—but what fortunate chance threw it in your way?”

“This, my dear child—said he—my servant brought to me, and said he found it in the wood, I immediately recognised it, and many a bitter pang has it cost me; for I apprehended that by some accident

you

you had fallen into the hands of robbers, and was there murdered. This portrait—continued he—was given to a Mrs. Clark, to whose care we confided you while we made the tour of Europe—Oh, my daughter ! my dearest Matilda ! those lovely features call to my remembrance your dear mother's image. Here he renewed his embraces, which Matilda returned with equal warmth and affection.

She could scarce believe that he was her father; indeed her senses had almost failed her; and the thoughts of being dragged nobody knew whither, had nearly drove her to distraction;—this sudden transition

from

from terror to joy, raised such tumultuous emotions in her bosom, that her newly discovered parent was alarmed for her safety—but, that all-protecting power who is ever a friend to the virtuous, and always ready to favour them in time of need, supported her agitated spirits ; and, when least expected, wrought her deliverance ; which brings to my recollection the speech of Andromache.

“ Though plunged in ills, and exercis'd in care,
 “ Yet never let the noble mind despair ;
 “ When prest by danger, and beset with foes,
 “ The Gods their timely succour interpose,
 “ And when our virtue sinks o'erwhelmed
 with grief,
 “ By unforeseen expedients bring relief.”

“ Ye sons and daughters of affliction, read this, and if you are like
 Matilda

Matilda it will not fail to afford you comfort—be virtuous—scorn vice—and though envelopped in the garb of sorrow, be confident that before it is too late, you will be rescued from the impending ruin, and that happiness will be your ultimate reward."

Matilda little imagined that she was the daughter of a nobleman, and, indeed, the change was so sudden, that she could scarce bring herself to believe it real—in all her afflictions she had ever evinced a firm reliance on the goodness of that Being who rewardeth every one according to his works, and she at length perceived that what she had dreaded as one of the greatest misfortunes of her life, had eventually raised

raised her to the pinnacle of happiness.

Lord S.— was delighted at finding the daughter whom he had so long lamented, and whom he despaired of ever seeing more: but when in her he found a lady possessing accomplishments both of mind and person that would do honour to the rank she was born to, his joy surpassed all bounds.

His lordship's son, whom we have before noticed as a lover, paying his addresses to Matilda, now became her brother; their meeting tho' accompanied with a slight degree of embarrassment on her part, was truly affectionate; he expressed himself in the tenderest terms, and assured her

her that he considered it as the most fortunate circumstance of his life in having found so amiable a sister.

Meanwhile the villain who had caused Matilda such terror and dismay, taking advantage of the general confusion, had stolen unperceived away, like a guilty coward, fearing that if he staid he should meet with that punishment he so richly deserved.

After they had a little recovered from their surprise—Matilda addressing her father said : “ Mrs. Clark whom I was taught to believe was my mother, has long since rested in peace ; but let me hope that I have not only recovered a father, but a mother also ; oh, sir ! let me hasten to throw myself at her feet and implore her blessing.”

“ Alas ! —

“ Alas!—said Lord S.—my heart bleeds to think of your disappointment—no, my love! your dear mother has departed this life long since, and is I hope, happy in another. She died soon after our arrival from the continent.”

“ And now, my dear child—continued he—if you think that your spirits are sufficiently composed to listen to my narrative, I will make you acquainted with the particulars of my history.”

Matilda thanked him, and said that it would give her great pleasure—as to her spirits, they would be ungrateful indeed to be depressed after so happy an occurrence, and

she

she should be extremely anxious 'till he favoured her with the recital.

" You must know then, my dear Matilda, that at a very early period of my life, that fly, mischievous urchin, Cupid, singled me out as a mark; and took so sure an aim that he pierced my heart through and through—In short, I fell desperately in love with your mother when I was scarce eighteen."

" She was the daughter of a private gentleman, whose unbounded hospitality had put it out of his power to leave his daughter that fortune she had a right to expect."

" This circumstance was a sufficient objection to my father, who was

notorious for his mercenary and ambitious views. He declared, that if I presumed to form any connection, whatever, without his previous consent, that he would immediately disinherit me.

“ To this imperious declaration I refused to pay obedience, and I soon after was united to your most amiable mother.”

“ About this time an uncle of mine died, of whom I was a very great favourite, and left me a handsome fortune, which enabled me to live in affluence and happiness without being under the disagreeable necessity of supplicating the assistance of an obdurate father.”

“ Exasperated

“ Exasperated to a degree at my disobedience, and mortified that by the munificence of my uncle I was enabled to appear in the higher circles without his assistance; his enmity knew no bounds—he envied the happiness which I enjoyed with the woman I loved, and was continually contriving some means or other to separate us.”

“ We parried his malignity for some time, but his perseverance at length rendered our lives very uncomfortable. I intended shortly to make the tour of Europe, and therefore was determined to set off on our travels without delay.”

“ Accordingly we commenced our preparations, and in less than a

week found ourselves in the metropolis of France, on our way to Italy."

" Previous to our departure, I had singled out Mr. Clark, as a man whose principles I looked upon as strictly honourable—to him I confided my infant Matilda, and with her a large sum of money in case any accident should befall us; as my father would rather have rejoiced in any misfortune that might have happened to my offspring, than have relieved their necessities."

" I was more fortunate in the choice of a guardian for your brother; he paid every attention to his acquirements, and I am happy to say, that I believe he is as accomplished

as though I had myself superintended his education."

"We remained in Italy about three years, when your mother found herself in a likely way to present me with another son or daughter: we therefore as soon as possible returned to England, and happily arrived without your mother's experiencing any inconvenience in the journey."

"What were your mother's sufferings, when no Mrs. Clark, nor no Matilda was to be found; every possible enquiry was made; advertisements were sent to all the public papers, with a handsome reward to any one who would give intelligence

N 3

of you; but no tidings could we hear of our child; however, I still cherished some hopes that from my picture which your dear mother had fastened round your neck, when we left you with Mrs. Clark, would some time or other lead to a discovery; but all our endeavours, and all our hopes were frustrated." ~~and of course~~
~~isque aindom they modifw hovit~~
~~the~~ Your guardian had treacherously betrayed his trust, and fled his country, lest he should be brought to account for the sum of money which we had through a blind confidence entrusted to his care."

" It would be difficult to attempt a description of your mother's sufferings, when she was obliged to abandon the idea of recovering her dear

Matilda

Matilda: she upbraided herself a thousand times for leaving her dear little girl behind her."

She would sometimes exclaim—
 " Alas, my poor child, my Matilda, is, perhaps, now struggling with poverty and wretchedness! whilst I am blest with fortune's choicest favours, and have no wish remaining ungratified, except the society of my dearest daughter. Oh, it is too much! I cannot bear it: the thought of leaving her to the care of strangers, stings my very soul: Oh, cruel, unnatural mother! how couldst thou abandon thy helpless, innocent babe!"

She never—continued he—held up her head after the fatal day that we went to see our little cherub, Matilda,

Matilda, and were so cruelly surprised at not finding her, nor her guardians."

" We had been in England about two months, when my wife, my adored wife, was suddenly snatched from me in giving birth to another son, who, a few moments before his mother, quitted this world, where nought but trouble, cares, and woe perpetually surround us—born at the expence of a parent's life, he experienced but a few moments of sorrow in his transitory passage. Imagination might depict him as one displeased with a world into which he had so tragical a reception, and therefore he declined his earthly existence, and his pure spirit mounted its aerial flight to heaven, the spotless harbinger of his

ABRAHAM

his parent's arrival; anxious to inform her kindred angels that the object of their admiration, who for many years on earth had imitated their celestial example, had just closed her embassy on earth, and would speedily arrive to claim her destined seat in heaven. The event being announced, the thronging cherubs rushed to the celestial portals, received her with hymns of joy, and led her to her lovely offspring, who had early been snatched from sublunary cares, and with emotions too divine for humanity to describe, surrounded their newly-arrived parent, and placed her with harmonious sounds in the mansions of everlasting bliss, where care no more could destroy her happiness."

" She

She was struck with astonishment at the goodness of her God, and adored him with a grateful heart, recommending her offsprings on earth to the protection of his omnipotent Providence."

" Oh, Matilda—continued he, taking her by the hand—what a happy moment would this have been for your mother, were she now on earth. Whenever I look on my daughter, methinks I see my much-loved wife, of whom you are the most perfect resemblance." Instead of being angry with the man that stole my child, I should return him thanks; perhaps had it

not been for him, I should for ever have remained ignorant of the fate of Matilda."

"What, in tears, my dearest child?" said he—perceiving the pearly drops coursing each other down her beauteous cheeks.

"Oh, Sir—replied she—it must give me pain not to see or even remember the parent who so much adored me; I must be strangely insensible to hear of her death, unmoved."

"I acknowledge the justice of your remark—replied his lordship—and honour your heart for its sensibility; but we should not regret the loss of those who are dead, it is upbraiding

Braiding God with cruelty; he is our best judge, and if we deserve it, orders every thing for our good."

" When fate deprived you of a mother, and me of a beloved wife, remember, she left a world of sorrow and wickedness, and went to one, unspotted, and unblemished; and let us hope that if we act as she did, we shall some day visit her in her heavenly abode."

Here his lordship tenderly embracing Matilda, and left her to enjoy that rest which the fatigue and surprise, during this bustling and eventful day, had rendered essentially necessary to her health.

They

They continued several days at the inn, when her father proposed returning home; and upon enquiring where he resided, had the pleasure to understand that she was again going to visit her old abode, and was happy to think that it was now in her power to reward Mary's former kindness to her.

The day was now fixed for their departure, and just as they were stepping into the carriage Matilda received the following letter from Mr. Clark.

Madam,

" With what pleasure I received
" the letter you thought proper to
" honor me with! — It informs me

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O

that

" that you have found a parent, and
 " have received that reward which
 " you have so highly merited, and
 " I am firmly convinced that virtue
 " is never left unprotected, but that a
 " guardian angel hovers over the
 " heads of the virtuous—Oh, had I
 " ever thought thus, I should not
 " have been the wretch I am !"

" You requested me to disclose to
 " you what I know respecting your
 " mysterious birth, which I will
 " most willingly do, and hope my
 " sincerity will prove to you the
 " truth of my repentance."

" It is very true that Lord S—,
 " is your father; but is it possible,
 " much injured young lady, that
 " you

“ you can pardon the sorrows my
“ cruelty has exposed you to.”

“ Blame not my poor wife, she
“ was wholly innocent, and our
“ frequent quarrels were chiefly
“ caused by her teasing me to re-
“ turn you to your parents; but
“ that I could not do without re-
“ storing to them the sum of money
“ they left with me as your portion,
“ should any accident happen to
“ them in their travels.—The glit-
“ tering temptation overcame my
“ honesty; I considered it as my
“ own, and used it accordingly, which
“ put it out of my power to see your
“ father; and I threatened my wife
“ with instant death should she di-
“ vulge the secret.

“ I changed
O 2

“ I changed my abode, and took
 “ the house we lived in when you
 “ left us; you know it was conceal-
 “ ed by the surrounding wood, there
 “ we kept you in the greatest pri-
 “ vacy.”

“ I should have returned you to
 “ your friends, but that I could not
 “ do it without accounting for the
 “ money that had been left in my
 “ hands, which, my betraying the
 “ trust reposed in me by your noble
 “ father, rendered impossible.”

“ You were a sweet smiling babe
 “ when delivered to our care—my
 “ poor wife adored you, and consi-
 “ dered you as her own child, and
 “ was ever endeavouring to per-
 “ suade me to reveal to you the
 “ claim

“ claim you had to a far superior
 “ rank than ours ; but in vain, I
 “ was obstinate, and always charged
 “ her to be silent.

“ You cannot forget going from
 “ my house, nor, to my shame, the
 “ cause that induced you to it : per-
 “ mit me to introduce the subject.”
 “ I left home after having wick-
 “ edly settled the terms of your
 “ projected ruin, and went a hunt-
 “ ing with a villain, like myself,
 “ who is since gone abroad—I can-
 “ not dwell long on this subject, it
 “ calls my crimes back to my re-
 “ membrance, and innocence calls
 “ a loud for revenge.”

" Yet, sure, did you but know
 " what I now suffer, I am prompt-
 " ed to say you would forgive me;
 " excuse my presumption, but I
 " have attoned for all my crimes."

" Upon my returning to that
 " home from which you had fled,
 " to preserve your virtue from vio-
 " lation, I found myself reduced
 " to beggary; the house had been
 " robbed, and I was stripped of all
 " the wealth, that of right belong-
 " ed to you—all was gone, and my
 " ambitious views were changed to
 " a prospect of poverty and wretch-
 " edness."

" I never could conjecture by
 " whom, or how the robbery was
 " perpetrated

“ perpetrated until your letter in-
“ formed me.”

“ I most earnestly crave your for-
“ giveness of the injuries you have
“ suffered through me; and ardent-
“ ly hope that another tear will
“ never fall from the injured Matil-
“ da; but that the paternal affec-
“ tions of a noble father, and the
“ fraternal kindness of a brother
“ will make her ever happy.”

“ By the time you will receive
“ this, I shall be far out of the reach
“ of those punishments the law and
“ your father have a right to inflict
“ on the cruel, though penitent,
“ G. Clarke.”

abitsM

This

This letter cost Matilda a few tears ;—her susceptible heart still felt the emotions of her childhood, when she looked upon Mr. Clarke as her father, and she secretly regretted his wretched situation ; but the presence of a parent who had suffered so much in regretting her loss, soon cheered up her drooping spirits ; and all her tender solicitudes were now turned to his lordship and her brother.

Just as she had finished reading the letter a servant came to announce that his lordship was desirous of returning home as soon as possible, and taking a grateful farewell of Mrs. Michell, obeyed the summons.

Matilda

Matilda was handed into the carriage by her father. They proceeded by easy stages, nevertheless Matilda found herself much fatigued with her journey, but a few days quite recovered her, and she was extremely delighted with her new residence — the house and pleasure grounds which surrounded it were very similar to Lady Harvey's.

It was rather an unpleasant circumstance to be situated so near the sons of her ladyship, as the sight of them would always remind her of her former troubles; but in a short time these disagreeable sensations gradually disappeared.

CHAP.

Meets Mary, her situation.

SAHO

She

She found Mary was much altered — she appeared dejected and pale, and the traces of sorrow were visible on her countenance. Mr. Homes looked very low spirited, but addressed Matilda in her usual vulgar manner.

She expressed her surprise at seeing so great an alteration in her, wondered at her having so fine a coach, and finally begged to know what became of her when she left their house.

Matilda satisfied her enquiries, and desired to have a private conversation with Mary. When they were alone, Mary asked after Mr. Edward.

Matilda

Matilda informed her of his cruelty, baseness and perfidy, and related the whole story; when Mary burst into tears, and sighed and sobbed as though her heart was breaking—“ Oh, then my dear Miss!—said she—we may go hand in hand in sorrow.”

“ But—replied Matilda, smiling—I have now no cause for sorrow, thanks to heaven, the very plot that was in practice for my ruin has proved the most fortunate incident of my life!—but should any thing of that nature disturb your peace, let me persuade you to drive it from your thoughts in time.”

Ah, Miss!—cried Mary—I cannot set such resolution; it would be
happy

happy for me if I could ; but sure such cruelty as I have met with will not go unrewarded."

" You may remember—continued she—the evening when you left Mrs. Lake's my neglect in not calling upon you, it was owing to a surprise meet with from Mr. Jason, just as I was coming to you."

He came to our house, equipped for a journey, and told us that he was going to London immediately ; for his father had sent for him on business of importance.

My mother told him that she hoped his stay in London would not be long, and that we should

soon see him again ; he said he did not think that he should return any more, and then bidding me a cold adieu, he left me to bemoan my unhappy fate.

Matilda could not help pitying her, as the girl was in some measure to be excused ; for it was more her mother's folly than her own, as she was always encouraging her to believe the fine promises that Mr. Jason was in the habit of making her.

" But—continued Mary—I thought it strange that you never acquainted Mr. Edward with the place of your residence, I often enquired if he had received any intelligence of you,

you, but he always shook his head, and said he could obtain no tidings of you. Sukey, Mrs. Lake's maid, often said that she was sure he knew more of you than he would own, which has frequently made me very unhappy.

" Well — replied Matilda — my good girl ! I have it now in my power to repay you for all your kindness to me ; and which I can assure you is a pleasure I never expected to enjoy."

She then told her whose daughter she was, and by what accident she came to be so happy as to discover her father;—“as to the man claiming me for his wife, I am since con-

vinced that it was a scheme of Edward's, to get me into his power." She then begged Mary to prepare to leave her mother, as she wished her to return home with her and partake of the happiness she now enjoyed; this proposition did not require much consideration. Her mother readily gave her consent, and Mary was soon ready to return with Matilda, who, when she was taking leave of Mrs. Homes, told her that she should never want a friend, and desired her to apply to her, whenever she should have occasion for her assistance.

Matilda, and her young friend returned home, and upon his lordship's hearing the important services that Mary had rendered his daughter, and

and that her mother's condition was not very eligible, he desired that she might instantly be admitted into his family.

The happy life Matilda and Mary led together caused her soon to forget the neglect and ill-treatment of Mr. Jason, and her natural vivacity and good humour soon returned.

One circumstance made Edward appear more disgusting to her than ever; which was, that as most of the young gentlemen of that country visited Matilda's brother, and amongst them Edward had the presumption to make his appearance.

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He expressed his surprise at seeing her situation so much altered; and said how happy he was to see so virtuous a lady rewarded.

He then pretended that his affairs were now settled, and that he should be happy to lay himself and his fortune at her feet.

“ No!—cried Matilda—if I was not worthy to become your wife when forlorn and friendless, I now have no occasion for such an honour; now, I am blessed with both fortune and friends.”

“ Should you renew this subject, Sir, I will most certainly expose your cruelty and deceit; but if you will

will remain silent on the subject, I shall esteem you as the friend of my brother."

Here end the sorrows of virtue. One who, unprotected, plunged herself into misery and wretchedness, to avoid treading in the path of dishonour.

She lived happy, and in pleasing tranquility under the protection of a kind and tender father, whose goodness encreased her filial affection, insomuch, that she could never bear the thoughts of being separated from him; thus free from the cares of being a wife, and the perplexities of a family, did this virtuous girl ever remain: dispensing the gifts of fortune